

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers April 27, 2005

NETS Feature

NETS Launches Traffic Safety Ribbon Awareness Campaign

To launch the ninth annual Drive Safely Work Week campaign season, the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) and its member partners are sponsoring a national ribbon awareness campaign. The teal and black "Drive Safely" ribbons will serve as a silent remembrance to those who have lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes and remind all motorists to "Drive Safely" to prevent further tragic roadway crashes.

...More: http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/ribbon_041505feat.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Washington, DC Campaign Encourages Drivers To Slow Down

Washington, DC Metropolitan police hope a new advertising campaign will draw driver attention to the city's growing red light and speeding traffic camera program. The \$250,000 campaign targeting 18 to 34 year old men includes 30 and 60-second radio spots as well as posters on city buses. The new campaign follows the February installation of stationary radar cameras. Police say revenue generated from the fines will help pay for the ad campaign. Read the full article at

<http://www.wjla.com/news/stories/0305/216767.html>

Aluminum Assoc. Says Lighter Trucks, Vehicles Safer

According to the Aluminum Association, lighter vehicles will perform better than their heavier counterparts. According to research by the Aluminum Association, a 20 percent lighter SUV would be involved in 15 percent fewer fatal crashes in comparison to heavier vehicles. The Association along with its allies wants to keep federal regulators from including weight in new CAFÉ standards. The current rules are 30 years old. New rules could change the definition of a light truck and add categories.

Airbag Surpass Stereos As Biggest Theft Target

Recent research shows that airbags have surpassed stereo equipment as the most frequent target of theft, creating a black market being tapped by some repairers. Since 1996, airbag theft has cost the insurance industry \$253 million. Now, compounding the problem is a growing number of inappropriate repairs in which legitimate airbag modules are not used. At least two people have died as a result of this practice. To reduce this dangerous trend, Ford Motor Co. has created a website with a database containing the serial numbers for all replacement airbags sold since February 1, 2002. Read the full article at <http://www.collision-insight.com/news/20050324-ford.htm>

States Debate In-Vehicle Black Box Devices

Amid safety and privacy concerns, several state lawmakers are hoping to regulate black boxes in vehicles, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). For example, California has a law requiring dealers and vehicle rental companies to inform drivers when a car has a black box. Similarly, in New York it is illegal for rental companies to use global positioning system technology to

track drivers and use the data to charge extra or penalties. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0503/25/01-129237.htm>

North Dakota Lawmakers Agree On 'Black Boxes'

North Dakota lawmakers have settled their differences on a new bill that would give ownership of the data collected by vehicle event data recorders (EDRs) or black boxes to vehicle owners. Under the agreement, insurance companies cannot force customers to give away the data by threatening to revoke their insurance policy. Additionally in cars made on and after 2007, the owner's manual must disclose the presence of a black box and its technical abilities. The final provision clarifies that the data collected by the black box belongs to the person who owned the vehicle when the data was collected. Read the full article at <http://www.grandforks.com/mld/grandforks/news/legislature/11330372.htm>

Tiny Sensors May Be The Answer To Preventing Rollovers

Scientists at the University of California at Berkeley are working to develop tiny wireless sensors that could help prevent vehicle rollovers, increase driver control, as well as adjust to the tiniest bumps. These tiny devices, which are bonded to the steel car frame and vibrate when the steel stretches or contracts, are nearly 10,000 times more sensitive than commercially available instruments. According to researchers, when dozens of these sensors are used together they could communicate wirelessly to help stabilize a vehicle. Read the full article at http://businessweek.com/technology/content/apr2005/tc2005041_5945.htm

AAA: Despite High Gas Prices, Cost Of Driving Remains Steady

According to a recent AAA study, despite higher gasoline costs, the average cost of driving a passenger vehicle in the United States has remained nearly unchanged since last year. AAA estimates that it will cost approximately 56.1 cents per mile, or \$8,410 per year, to own and operate a new passenger car. Last year, it was estimated at 56.2 cents per mile or \$8,431 annually. Offsetting higher gasoline costs are reductions in the annual average cost of insurance, licensing, registration and taxes, as well as tires and maintenance. The study also estimates that the average new car will depreciate \$3,879 per year of ownership, compared to \$3,782 in 2004. For more information visit http://oilspot2.dtnenergy.com/e_article000377397.cfm?x=b4DnJ33,bCDggKf

IIHS Report Combats Alcohol-Impaired Driving

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) recently released a special Status Report examining the problem of alcohol-impaired driving world-wide and suggesting strategies to help combat the problem. View the report at <http://www.hwysafety.org/srpdfs/sr4004.pdf>

Lane Departure Warning Systems Warn Wandering Drivers

Forty percent of U.S. road fatalities or nearly 18,000 people a year die as a result of unintentional lane or road departure. Now, automakers and suppliers are working on creating virtual rumble strips, known as lane departure warning systems. These new safety devices typically use sound or seat vibrations to warn drivers that they are wandering out of their lane. Read the full article at <http://www.designnews.com/article/CA513605.html?section=supplement>

Car Mirrors Get A New Look

Updated side mirrors with lights and arrows are bringing new attention to luxury cars, trucks, and SUVs in recent years. Now, one company is hoping to make the mirror upgrade available to all makes and models. Auto Care Products is launching the "Turn Smart Mirror System" that can be easily added to any model. Operating on radio waves, the two small wide-angle mirrors attach with two-sided tape to the outer edges of the existing side mirrors. Four super-bright LEDs are embedded in each Turn Smart mirror and point outward, flashing when the turn signals are activated. The mirrors also reduce



IIHS: Death Rate Varies By Vehicle Type

According to IIHS, the risk of death isn't the same in one vehicle compared to another. The average driver death rate in 1999-2002 passenger vehicle models during 2000-2003 was 87 million per million registered vehicle years. IIHS found that large cars and minivans dominate among vehicles models with very low death rates. Models with the highest death rates include small cars, and small and midsize SUVs. View the IIHS report at <http://www.iihs.org/srpdfs/sr4003.pdf> Read the full article at <http://www.womanmotorist.com/index.php/news/main/3718/event=view>

New Partnership In Texas To Combat Drinking And Driving

Texas lawmakers, The Century Council, and the Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission are partnering together to publicize the dangers of drinking and driving. It is estimated that more than seven out of 10 American adults do not know their state's BAC limit for drinking and driving, and nearly 80 percent do not know how many standard drinks they would need to consume to reach a BAC level of 0.08 percent.

Community Interventions Reduce Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes

A recent study tested whether comprehensive community interventions that focus on reducing alcohol availability and increasing substance abuse treatment can reduce alcohol-related fatal traffic crashes. Known as "Fighting Back Communities," the study found that these select areas did experience declines of approximately 22 percent in alcohol related fatal crashes.

Source: Injury Prevention Authors: R.W. Hingson, R.C. Zakocs, T. Heeren, M.R. Winter, D. Rosenbloom, W. DeJong

NCSL 2004 Traffic Safety Legislative Update Now Available

A new report by the National Council of State Legislatures summarizes proposed bills on traffic safety that were considered by state legislatures during the 2004 legislative session. The summarization was prepared to provide information about current traffic safety issues to legislators, federal officials, and other interest organizations. For more information visit

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/transportation/04trafficsafety.htm>

New Video To Help Drivers Prevent, Prepare For A Crash

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is releasing "Crash Course: What to Know Before and After a Collision," a DVD/VHS that provides tips on how to avoid a collision, explains the steps to take at the scene after a crash has occurred, and how to effectively deal with insurance claim issues. The DVD/VHS also provides a discussion of automobile insurance coverage. For more information visit

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=CrashCourse>

News from USDOT

FHWA Closes The Gaps To Make Work Zones Safe For Visually Impaired

Sidewalk work zone signs can be an inconvenience for all pedestrians, but they pose a particular challenge for people with visual disabilities, if there are no detectable devices set up to alert and guide them around the work zone. As part of its goal to make work zones safer for all motorists, workers, and pedestrians, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) partnered with the American Traffic Safety Services Association and the U.S. Access Board to hold the first Pedestrian Accommodations and Delineation Devices Demonstration. The demonstration was held outdoors in a simulated work zone walkway. Eleven manufacturers displayed 19 different pedestrian guidance and channeling devices.

Devices tested included talking lights and specially modified plastic drums and barricades with interlocking connections to reduce gaps. For more information visit <http://www.tfrc.gov/focus/mar05/02.htm>

NHTSA To Require New Tire Pressure Safety Standard

A new motor vehicle safety standard by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will require all passenger cars to have tire pressure monitoring systems beginning with the 2006 model year. The new ruling will require manufacturers to install a system that can detect when one or more of the vehicle's tires are 25 percent or more below the recommended inflation pressure. NHTSA estimates that about 120 lives a year will be saved with the new regulations. Read the release at <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/nhtsa0805.htm>

FHWA Kicks Off 5th Annual Work Zone Awareness Week

The FHWA urged drivers to follow safe driving habits as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week, April 4-8, 2005. Work zone fatalities have increased 48 percent since 1997, according to the FHWA. In 2003, work zone crashes claimed 1,028 lives and injured 41,239 others. Four out of five people killed in work zones are either drivers or passengers. The FHWA encouraged drivers to follow its "Ten Tips for Driving Safely in Work Zones," including slowing down, obeying road crew flaggers, and avoiding tailgating. For more information visit http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/wz_awareness.htm

Survey Reveals Variations In 2004 Belt Use Survey

New data from NHTSA's national Occupant Protection Survey (NOPUS) shows that drivers carrying passengers, particularly children, are more likely to wear seat belts than those who do not have passengers. However, NOPUS also found that 47 percent of rear-seat occupants were belted compared to 80 percent in the front seat. For more information visit <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/Traffic-Safety-Facts/Research-Notes/SeatBelt-Use-2004/pages/page%203.html>

FHWA Releases Executive Summary Evaluating Red-Light Camera Study

The FHWA released an executive summary for the report, "Safety Evaluation of Red-Light Cameras." The summary found that even though red-light cameras have a positive effect on angle crashes, these results are partially offset by an increase in rear-end crashes. The summary also concluded that there is a modest economic benefit between \$39,000 and \$50,000 per each treated site. View the executive summary at <http://www.tfrc.gov/safety/pubs/05049/index.htm>

Work-Life

Study: Older Airbags Increase Injury Risk For Children

According to a recent study published by the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, children wearing safety belts who are exposed to older air bags in frontal crashes face a higher risk of serious injury compared with those in vehicles with newer airbags. The report evaluated first-generation airbags from 1994 to 1997 model years and second-generation airbags from 1998 to 2001 model years. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0504/05/01-139119.htm>

Study Compares Parent Restrictions In GDL, Non-GDL State

A new study attempted to determine whether parent-imposed limits on 16 year old drivers are stricter in Maryland, a state with graduated driver licensing (GDL), than in Connecticut, a state without a GDL system. The findings indicate that Maryland parents and adolescents reported stricter parent-imposed limits for adolescent passengers, high-speed roads, weekend night driving, and overall limits. Source: Accident Analysis and Prevention Authors: J.L. Hartos, B.G. Simons-Morton, K.H. Beck, W.A. Leaf

Report: Four Child Passenger Safety Seats Fail New Federal Safety System

A recent study by the Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, found that four models of child passenger safety seats performed poorly in crash tests that used the new federally required safety system. The new safety system, known, as Latch, is intended to make it easier to attach child passenger safety seats to vehicles. The Combi Avatar child seat fared worst in the study. Other child seats that came unhooked during crash testing included, Evenflo PortAbout 5, Combi model Tyro and Britax International's Britax Marathon (M).

Like Father, Like Son

A new study examining the associations between parents and the driving styles of their adult children found significant similarities between the two groups. The study included 475 members of 174 families and concluded that there were specific associations between father-son and mother-daughter driving styles.

Source: Transportation Research: Traffic Psychology and Behavior Authors: O. Taubman-Ben-Ari, M. Mikulincer, O. Gillath

International Traffic Safety News:

Proposed Legislation In UK Raise Employer Liability To New Level

In its final stages of holding companies responsible for failing in their duty of care to employees driving for business, the UK government has revealed a tough new Corporate Manslaughter Bill. The new criminal offense proposal will apply when someone has been killed because the senior management of a corporation has grossly failed to take reasonable care for the safety of its employees or others. It is designed to ensure that companies, rather than individuals, can be prosecuted, with prosecution leading to unlimited fines. The new law would also allow police to look at a wider range of management conduct and focuses responsibility on the working practices of the organization, rather than limiting investigations to questions of individual gross negligence. The law is also expected to sharply increase insurance costs.

Study: Driver Training Effective Fatigue Management Tool

A New Zealand study evaluated the use of driver training programs as a countermeasure to drowsy driving. As part of the study, driver education programs were developed and implemented for light vehicle drivers working for a major oil company, and heavy vehicle drivers working for its distributing contractors. The findings suggest that immediate knowledge gains at the time of training were largely retained. In fact, a significant proportion of drivers had implemented at least some of the strategies suggested, and the majority perceived at least some benefit from fatigue management training.

Source: Transportation Research: Traffic Psychology and Behavior Authors: P.H. Gander, N.S. Marshall, W. Bolger, I. Girling.